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SUBJECT: NEW ZEALAND FOCUSES ON REFORM OF PACIFIC ISLAND FORUM

REF: STATE 151991

1. (U) On July 27, Poloff shared ref A points on the 2004 Pacific Islands Forum (PIF) with Paul Willis, Regional Deputy Director, Pacific Division, New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade. Willis indicated that Prime Minister Helen Clark would lead the New Zealand delegation to the PIF, as New Zealand is outgoing Chair of the Forum. However, she will be departing for Tokelau August 7) 10, and Foreign Minister Phil Goff will head the delegation on those dates. Goff is currently scheduled for a bi-lateral with A/S Kelly on August 8.

2. (U) Willis noted that the GoNZ's primary focus for the Forum would be continuing the momentum on PIF reform generated by the release of the Pacific Plan. Willis outlined additional higher priority GoNZ agenda items, including HIV/AIDS and the threat of other communicable diseases, specifically the implementation of the SPC regional strategy on disease. In terms of the Australia-crafted Pacific Regional Transport Strategy, the GoNZ was firmly behind the Australians. They would be pressing for follow-up on security and transport issues that have stalled in recent months. Willis also noted a few issues that were likely to appear on the margins of discussion. He advised that the GoNZ would likely support French Polynesia's candidacy for observer status at the Forum, noting that they had fulfilled the obligations for such a position. Climate change would be discussed, but was seen as a much less contentious issue than at last year's meeting. Willis theorized that the Government of Nauru would appeal for broader regional assistance, but this would take place at the Leader's Retreat, and not in the formal session.
Swindells